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Shower for Nancy

H&S SCENE



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There were gifts under the Christmas tree at the Union League Club in Chicago when some thirty-five H&S partners, managers and supervisors gathered for their annual Christmas party last December 24. Almost all the gifts were for audit manager Nancy Mast's baby, who was at the party. It wasn't that Nancy could not find a babysitter—it was just that the baby had not yet been born. ● Turning the Christmas party into a baby shower to celebrate the coming "big event" for Nancy, Chicago's first manager taking maternity leave, was largely the inspiration of partner John Walsh. Highlight of the event was watching Nancy unwrap the gifts placed under the tree by those attending the party ("Everyone was invited to bring a gift," Chicago partner in charge Charlie Steele said, "with only one proviso—that it be either humorous or useful.") ● One of the gifts was a Snoopy-type aviator helmet and goggles in honor of the fact that Nancy had earned a pilot's license only a month before. "The timing was perfect," she said. "The doctor told me to quit flying about a week before I ran out of seat belt." Nancy's husband Neal, a supervisor with Bell Telephone Laboratories in nearby Naperville, also is a flyer and is co-owner with a friend of a light aircraft. ● The party also marked Nancy's ninth year with the Firm. Nancy joined the Chicago office of H&S in December 1966 after earning a bachelor's degree from DePauw University and an MBA from the University of Michigan. She became a manager in 1973 and has been working on major engagements, such as Kimberly-Clark Corporation. ● The baby shower did not come as a total surprise to Nancy. "I guess I blew it," she said. "I decided to take the day as a vacation day but was told that I'd better be at the Christmas party." ● For Nancy, whose world up to now has revolved around the dual axes of husband and profession, the baby, her first, means a major change in her life. In the weeks before the baby was born she suddenly found herself a full-time housewife. "I've never cleaned out so many closets," she said. Much of her day was spent working in the greenhouse her husband built for her last summer. "We grow things we like to look at," she said. ● Nancy does not intend to lose contact with the public accounting profession during her months away from Haskins & Sells. "I expect to keep up with developments in the profession," she said. "I've been a CPA long enough so that I don't think this will prove a problem while I am away from H&S." ● Nancy may have left the office on Christmas Eve, but she was not forgotten by those who attended the party. According to Rey Hoffmann, bets were taken on four pools during the festivities. Three were, as usual, football bowl games. The fourth was the "Baby Bowl," with those participating asked to guess the date of birth of Nancy's baby, its sex and weight and the time of birth. Since Nancy had made no secret of the fact that her doctor had named February 5

as the "due date," even the most inexperienced bettors were provided with a fair starting point for their pool entries. With the birth of Jennifer Anne Mast on January 25—she weighed in at seven pounds, one-half ounce—manager Joe Stojak was announced winner of the "Baby Bowl." ● The birth of Jennifer Anne certainly has affected Nancy's life. Does it have any impact on operations of the Chicago office? Both Charlie Steele and Rey Hoffmann, who is responsible for assignments, answered in the affirmative. Certainly, having a manager on a major engagement such as Kimberly-Clark away for up to six months on maternity leave causes some disruption in scheduling. Should that manager be replaced permanently on the engagement, and then assigned to a different engagement when she returns? Or should an individual be assigned to cover for her temporarily? ● Obviously there are problems, but neither man felt these to be particularly pressing. "You've got to remember that in many respects time is on our side," Mr. Steele pointed out. "It still takes nine months to have a baby, so we get a fair amount of notice." ● Rey Hoffmann agrees. "In this particular case we're talking about one individual, so it was easy enough to make arrangements well in advance so that the client continues to receive the kind of quality service he has been getting and expects to receive in the future." ● But there are now about twenty women on the staff in Chicago, and all signs point to the number growing in the future as more and more qualified women recognize the career and growth potential of the public accounting profession. ● "I suppose that could complicate matters sometime in the future," Mr. Hoffmann said. "I mean, as the proportion of women in staff and managerial positions increases, you are likely to get a larger number leaving temporarily to have families. However, I think this is a development that will take place gradually enough so that we can make whatever changes have to be made to deal with such a situation as it arises." ● This was the first baby shower combined with the Chicago office Christmas party for management, but it may not be the last.